

Sermon for 13 August 2023 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Scriptures: Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28; Psalter: (*Insert Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b*): Romans 10:5-15; Matthew 14:22-33

Joseph and his brothers...How many of you know this story? Joseph and his brothers and their old daddy, Isaac... how many remember that? What good does it do to bring all this up every three years, if we follow the Lectionary? Your replies welcomed

All right. What's Paul saying today in the passage from Romans? He's building a new movement ... right? How'd he get started on that? Knocked down, turned upside down, converted ... right? Is that important to us? Have you ever seen somebody turned completely around, for a lifetime? Is that what we teach, here? "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news." Are we supposed to be teachers? With our lives? Our relationships? Our votes?

What else? Jesus walks on water ... right? Peter does, too... and then what happens? How's that supposed to affect our lives? Where do we fit in this picture?

I have no sermon title today. Did you notice that?

Ever since CoVid, when we first started coming back, and calling in, there's been a problem with the bulletin. To get the bulletin out in time to deliver it to people at home, the church mice changed their whole calendar, and began meeting on Tuesdays instead of Thursdays. That means I have to decide Sunday evening what next week's sermon title is ... and that's just too hard, let me tell you from experience.

This week, I prayed and thought, and I got a title; but I just couldn't put it down on Sunday night. And so, I decided from now on, we'll have the bulletin, based on the lectionary readings, like we do ... and I can get that to Charles and Leroy by Monday morning... I hope ... but my title can wait, just like I've kept you waiting today.

What came to me, as I thought and prayed and studied, was what this week's been pointing to. Some of us remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This past week marked the 78th year since those bombings took place. And this year, with the movie, "Oppenheimer," and all the talk about it, and all the details of history that are coming out, at least for a little while, to make us think, and shrink, and pray, and, please God, work for some changes for the future of the world... I was given the title, "Remorse," for our sermon today.

Sisters and brothers, little children, and everyone on the call-in, this is not a blame-game or a gloom-room chat. We've heard it. We know it. Those people in those awful pictures, and the rest of us over here who went about our business thousands of miles away it's not about who was at fault and what should have been.

This is about what happens now, to humanity and the literal globe itself. We can sense there's some fresh energy alive for a change right now. We also know we belong to the most powerful nation in the world for the moment ... and we know that prayer is our thing, whether it's Joseph and his brothers and how that story plays out, or Paul's influence to help people believe in Jesus, or Jesus so empowering Peter, and then picking him up when he sank ... all that wonderful mystery that brings us here together and keeps us going down the road of justice and peace, and gives us hope when we sink down, and sees us sticking together even when we're scared, or in love, or faced with other matters ... all this Spirit we come alive through, all the time... Some of this hope and love and power needs to go towards nuclear disarmament, starting this anniversary.

Remorse for the horror of it, no matter what anybody else is doing. We're part of God's plan, and some of our energy this moment, this anniversary, this summer, needs to go towards a new and better vision than what we've just been living and re-living this week. We ARE all one, as a race ... we ARE God's ministers, our feet are beautiful.

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, take our hands, our thoughts, our prayers, and turn them into futures we have no way of telling will develop, to turn this world in a new direction, this season. Take our sorrow for the past, our willingness to think about the next step, our promise to go where you lead us and the rest of our sisters and brothers worldwide who are getting energized and inspired over this. We do know how to walk out on hope alone ... and because you are so trustworthy, so tender and loving of everything and everyone, we admit we don't need to know; but we do need to trust. So, dear One, help us to trust, and to reach for the opening that you shine down upon us, to make this a new age for humankind and for the planet and the birds and animals and all the wonders we have now remaining.

Enroll us in your forgiving plan for a different day, as we know Joseph and his brothers will show us in the weeks ahead. Pray with us. Believe in us ... rescue us when we look down and start sinking ...we pray, in Christ's name. Amen.